

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
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CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND STANDARDS
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Markup of H.R.4546, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Acts
Wednesday September 29, 2004, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

I welcome all of you to today's markup of H.R. 4546, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Act. The legislation we are considering today is an organic act for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (better known as NOAA).

An organic act defines the overall mission and functions of an agency. As an example, my bill, H.R. 4546 states that the mission of NOAA is: (1) to understand and predict changes in the Earth's oceans and atmosphere; (2) to conserve and manage coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes ecosystems; and (3) to educate the public about these topics. The bill also describes the specific functions NOAA should carry out to fulfill its mission, such as issuing weather forecasts and warnings.

NOAA was created in 1970 by then-President Nixon through an executive order that placed the agency in the Department of Commerce and transferred various oceanic and atmospheric functions from other agencies into the new NOAA. Since that time Congress has passed a hodgepodge of issue-specific legislation for NOAA, resulting in a confusing collection of laws that are not coordinated by an overarching mission for the agency.

In April, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy released its preliminary report, which called for Congress to pass an organic act for NOAA. That recommendation was supported by all the witnesses at a Science Committee hearing on the report. I had been working on such an act for almost a year and after consultation with many experts, introduced H.R.4546. This Subcommittee held a hearing on H.R.4546 on July 15 and received comments on the bill from the Administration and outside experts. At the hearing the bill received overwhelming support from the ocean and atmospheric science communities.

You may wonder why we are moving this bill so late in the legislative session. The final report from the Ocean Commission was released last week, creating much momentum for ocean issues pending before the Congress. As the House authorizing committee for a large part of NOAA, I believe it is our responsibility to move this bill along as far as possible this year. Also, our colleagues in the Senate are working quickly on similar legislative initiatives and we must be prepared to work with them when the time comes.

Today's markup should be straightforward and non-controversial. I will offer a manager's amendment that I will explain later, and I understand Mr. Udall has an amendment regarding research laboratories.

I should note that H.R. 4546 contains very little language about fisheries or resource management at NOAA because those topics are under the jurisdiction of the Resources Committee, in particular the subcommittee chaired by my colleague from Maryland, Mr. Gilchrest. I understand it will be difficult to pass a NOAA organic act through that Committee this year, but I look forward to working with my colleagues first thing next Congress to pass truly comprehensive legislation for NOAA. In the meantime, it is important that the Science Committee move forward with this portion now.